

\$7.75M committed to U.S. 30

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FULTON, Ill. — Another big chunk of money for the U.S. 30 expansion project has fallen into place.

At a Highway 30 Coalition news conference and luncheon on Monday, Illinois Rep. Mike Boland, D-East Moline, announced the Illinois Department of Transportation has committed \$7.75 million in state funding to go toward converting U.S. 30 from Rock Falls to Fulton into a four-lane highway.

“We’ve suffered a lot of hard hits... and now we’re beginning to see some blue sky,” Boland said. “I believe we’re on our way with this project.”

According to IDOT Project Engineer Jon McCormick, actual construction of the four-lane expansion on U.S. 30 is expected to begin in 2012.

The funds currently earmarked as part of the state’s fiscal year 2007 budget in the amount of \$1.5 million and other funds from fiscal years 2008 through 2012, will serve as local matching dollars to leverage funds from the federal government for the project and pay for phase one of the project.

A small contingent of Coalition members was in Washington, D.C., on Monday, lobbying for an extra \$3 million in federal funding for the project.

Phase One of the U.S. 30 expansion is the planning stage. IDOT will complete a feasibility study and an Environmental Impact Statement in which it will collect traffic and environmental data and do a physical survey of the corridor. The phase also includes the coordination process with a citizens’ advisory group and public meetings to give area residents a chance to offer input into Phase Two, the design process, expected to take place over a period of two years. McCormick said as soon as IDOT has a consultant for the project, within the next year, the process can begin.

“It sounds like a long time, but with all the steps we have to go through, that’s a reasonable amount of time,” McCormick said.

Iowa Rep. Polly Bukta, D-Clinton, credited Boland and Fulton businesswoman Barb Suehl for pushing the U.S. 30 project hard enough to obtain the state funding.

“They never let up,” Bukta said. “Kudos to Barb Suehl and kudos to State Rep. Mike Boland for what they have done on their side of the river.”

Boland explained Suehl had been fighting for the project for the last eight years and was the first to recruit Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., who has been instrumental in the U.S. 30 project effort. Boland noted other state leaders, including Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill.,

Rep. Lane Evans, D-Ill., and Rep. Don Manzullo, R-Ill., have helped the coalition acquire the money necessary to get the project off the ground.

Highway 30 Coalition President David Rose told the crowd the journey started 10 years ago with a group of people who didn't know much about working on a project of this magnitude.

"We didn't know anything," Rose said. "We were just people who wanted to make a difference."

Rose said members of the coalition have worked very hard over the years to see the project going ahead and should be proud of themselves.

"It's an exciting area to live in," said Rose. "It's nice to be in an area that wants to grow and knows how to grow."

IDOT representative Ross Monk said the theme of the luncheon, "Luck o' the Irish" didn't quite encompass all that the coalition had done.

"Luck is where hard work meets opportunity," said Monk. "You guys were prepared. You worked hard for the money you got." He said he looks forward to the involvement of the surrounding communities for input and feedback on proposed changes to U.S. 30 and getting started on the project.

"We look forward to that. We are engineers at the department and we love to build things," said Monk.

Area leaders, including Clinton Mayor LaMetta Wynn, Fulton Mayor Howard Van Zuiden and Thomson (Ill.) Village President Merrie Jo Enloe, attended the meeting as well as representatives from the Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce, the Clinton and Carroll County boards, area city councils and city administration and members of the business community in the corridor.

During the question and answer period, Enloe asked IDOT representatives about how sure they were the money would definitely be there come budget time. She noted the village of Thomson had gotten all too familiar with projects being promised and then not being funded. Illinois DOT Region II Engineer Gregg Mounts assured Enloe the money is already set in the budget.

"This money is in our fiscal year 2007 budget. It will be available for us," said Mounts.

The construction to make U.S. 30 a four-lane highway is expected to cost an estimated \$150 million. The project could be completed in sections depending on available funding